

# Luke Shields

## Level 5 Operations Manager apprenticeship programme

UK POWER NETWORKS



Winner of the 2025 UKPN Ginny Baker Apprentice of the Year Award



### BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

#### Why did you choose to pursue an apprenticeship?

I began my career as a school leaver by completing an apprenticeship in cable joinery, which provided a structured and hands-on learning environment that aligns well with my preferred learning style. I thrive in settings where I can apply practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge, and I find this approach both engaging and effective.

#### What specific skills did you learn during your apprenticeship?

Throughout my apprenticeship, I learned to navigate diverse working environments and collaborate effectively with colleagues and clients, which strengthened my interpersonal skills. The experience also taught me the importance of empathy, active listening, and adaptability – key components of emotional intelligence – especially when working under pressure or resolving on-site challenges.

#### What projects or tasks have you been involved in?

Since completing my apprenticeship, I've had constructive discussions around my ongoing development and career direction. As a result, I've become more involved in financial aspects of the business. UK Power Networks operates within a financially complex environment, and this exposure has allowed me to broaden my understanding of commercial operations and develop skills in financial analysis and decision-making.

**“Working with the Pearson TQ programme and being part of an employer of choice like UK Power Networks has set me up for future success. In this environment, the only limit is how hard you're willing to work.”**

#### How has the apprenticeship helped you understand your chosen field better?

The CMI management apprenticeship deepened my understanding of leadership and organisational dynamics. It helped me develop a more strategic mindset and gave me practical tools to manage teams, communicate effectively, and contribute to business performance. ►

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

### What challenges have you faced during your apprenticeship?

One of the key challenges during my apprenticeship was managing time effectively, especially when balancing coursework with operational responsibilities. Working in the electrical network also meant preparing for and responding to issues caused by adverse weather, which required quick thinking, coordination, and resilience under pressure.

### How did you overcome these challenges?

I overcame time management challenges by setting clear priorities and using planning tools to stay organised, especially during busy operational periods. When dealing with electrical network issues such as bad weather, I relied on teamwork, proactive preparation, and staying calm under pressure to ensure safe and efficient responses.

### What support did you receive from your mentors or colleagues?

Throughout my apprenticeship, I received valuable support from both mentors and colleagues. Their guidance helped me navigate challenges, improve my time management, and build confidence in handling complex situations. Regular feedback and shared experiences were instrumental in my development and growth within the role.

## IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

### How has the apprenticeship impacted your career prospects?

The apprenticeship has significantly enhanced my career prospects by equipping me with practical leadership skills and a deeper understanding of business operations. It's opened up opportunities for greater responsibility and involvement in strategic areas such as finance and team management.

### What are your plans after completing the apprenticeship?

I'm now progressing onto the Level 7 apprenticeship, which will allow me to further develop my strategic leadership skills. My goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the responsibilities of Area Operations Managers and position myself to move into a role at that level in the coming years.

### Can you share success stories or significant achievements during your apprenticeship?

One of the most rewarding outcomes of my apprenticeship has been the noticeable improvement in my team's performance. As I've developed my leadership skills, my team has become more confident and proactive, willingly taking on greater responsibility. Their own skills have grown as a result of the training and support I've been able to provide, which reflects the positive impact of my development on the wider team. ►

## Progression pathway



GCSEs and  
AS Level



Cable Joinery  
apprenticeship



BTEC Level 3



Level 5  
Operations  
Manager  
apprenticeship



Level 7 Diploma  
in Strategic  
Management,  
MBA and senior  
management role

## Future ambitions



## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

### How has the apprenticeship contributed to your personal growth?

The apprenticeship has played a key role in my personal growth by improving my confidence, resilience, and ability to lead others effectively. It's helped me become more self-aware, better at managing pressure, and more proactive in seeking out development opportunities. I've also gained a clearer sense of direction in my career and the skills needed to progress.

### How has your confidence changed since starting the apprenticeship?

Since starting the apprenticeship, my confidence has grown significantly. Gaining new skills, taking on more responsibility, and seeing the positive impact on my team has reinforced my belief in my ability to lead effectively. I now feel more assured when making decisions and contributing to wider business discussions.

## FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### What advice would you give to someone considering an apprenticeship?

My advice to anyone considering an apprenticeship is to manage your time effectively and stay organised from the start. If you're struggling, don't hesitate to speak up - there's always support available. Make the most of every learning opportunity by actively engaging in all sessions and applying what you learn in real-world situations.

### How do you feel the apprenticeship has prepared you for your future career?

The apprenticeship has equipped me with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to take the next step in my career. It's helped me develop a strategic mindset, improve my leadership capabilities, and gain exposure to key areas like finance and operations. I now feel well-prepared to take on greater responsibilities and work towards progressing into a senior management role.

### What are your career ambitions for the future?

I'm now starting my Level 7 apprenticeship alongside an MBA, which marks a key step in my leadership development. I'm committed to continuing my self-development while also focusing on growing and empowering my team. I plan to take on additional responsibilities and work more closely with the Area Operations Manager to gain deeper insight into strategic leadership. Completing the Level 7 apprenticeship and MBA will position me well for future progression. My aim is to be ready to pursue a senior leadership role within the next three years.

Working with the Pearson TQ programme - especially under the mentorship of Julie Brooks - and being part of an employer of choice like UK Power Networks has set me up for future success. In this environment, the only limit is how hard you're willing to work. ■